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United States Department of Agriculture

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THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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AUGUST TOMATOES FOR HEALTH, ECONOMY, VARIETY

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The story of how the "poisonous love apple" became a highly prized food, is unique in vegetable history.

Carried to Europe from tropical America in the Sixteenth Century, the tomato was at first cautiously accepted. Then for nearly 400 years the world shared the opinion of an early botanist who described the vegetable as having "little nourishment for the bodie, and the same naught and corrupt". Although popular for its color and flavor for many years, the tomato did not win recognition as an important food until after the discovery of its vitamin value some 15 years ago.

Summer of 1938 finds the tomato more secure than ever in its lofty place in popular and scientific esteem.

The 10 million bushels of tomatoes grown for market in 1918 have been doubled, with a consistent year by year increase. Nearly 12 times as many tomatoes were processed by commercial canneries last year as when the first canning records were kept in 1885. From small beginnings in 1929, the production of commercial tomato juice increased over 72 times. Last year's output totaled more than 16 million cases (nearly 400 million cans).

Wage earners consume their share of the tomato crop, dietary studies recently completed by the Bureau of Home Economics indicate. Preliminary reports of

these studies show that white families of employed workers in cities in three widely separated regions of the country, used an average of about 27 to 37 pounds of fresh and canned tomatoes and tomato juice for every man, woman, and child during a 12-month period in 1935-36.

August and September are the months for fresh tomatoes in a majority of American homes. During these months local gardens come into heavy bearing throughout the North and West; while some of the central and southern fields are still yielding enough for the family table.

Late summer prices are usually within reach of families with a very limited food budget. Tomato prices usually tumble in June and July and strike rock bottom -- for the country as a whole -- in August and September.

The tomato still holds its unique place among vegetables as a valuable source of vitamin C, which must be supplied daily as it cannot be stored in the body. The value of the tomato as a source of this vitamin is based on the fact that its supply of C is not lost by cooking or canning. In addition it can be prepared in so many ways that the homemaker easily persuades her family to consume large quantities. Tests made by the Bureau of Home Economics indicate that none of the vitamin C content of the tomato is lost by the usual approved methods of home canning and that little if any is lost by storing opened juice for a few days in the refrigerator.

True, there is more ascorbic acid (vitamin C) content in some tomatoes than in others. There is even a difference in the C content of the same variety from the same patch through the season. But despite this variation tomatoes, whether fresh or canned, by home or commercial methods; whether served whole or in the juice qualify as "good" sources of vitamin C.

Although the tomato built up its reputation with the dietitians on the basis of its C content, that is not all the vegetable has to offer. Ripe tomatoes are

rich in vitamin A, also often inadequate in low-cost diets. Ripe and green tomatoes both supply C and B, some iron, and small amounts of other essential minerals. Their low calorie value recommends them for summertime diets, especially among those on the lookout for "reducing" foods.

Because canned as well as fresh tomatoes supply the vitamin C which cannot be stored in the body, those fortunate enough to have their own garden supplies should by all means can their surplus tomatoes for winter use. Sometimes village or small city market prices are so low that homemakers will even find it an economy to buy tomatoes for home canning.

Tomatoes are the only common vegetable safely and easily canned by the water-bath method. Their acid content helps to destroy dangerous organisms at the temperature of boiling water.

Experts from the Bureau of Home Economics advise the use of the hot or cold pack, rather than the open kettle method for tomatoes, as the combined effect of heat and air are known to destroy some of the precious vitamin C content. Tomatoes may be packed whole or in sterilized jars and the jars filled with tomato juice. Or they may be cut into quarters, heated to boiling and processed hot.

In canning use only firm, ripe tomatoes. If possible select bright red ones of a uniform size. Reject any tomatoes with moldy or partly decomposed portions. A bit of off-flavor quickly permeates the entire juicy tomato -- then the entire jar.

From the standpoint of the homemaker-cook what food could be more welcome than the luscious, juicy tomato? It brings a dozen possibilities for any meal.

If she wants a "beginner", tomato juice cocktail is always refreshing. Hot soup, generally an "out" for the month of August, is welcome as cold jellied tomato consomme.

For the main course tomatoes may be baked, plain or stuffed, stewed or scalloped, broiled or fried..And as for sauces for the meat or fish, for beans, or the rice or macaroni dish -- it was tomato sauce that tempted the first connoisseur to taste the "love apple", some accounts relate.

For salad, the tomato is the vegetable supreme. It is color, flavor, texture, all in one.

Here are a few tips for preparing tomatoes for the table this August.

Fresh tomato juice cocktail, which captures the flavor of the first luscious red slices is especially popular with many. For fresh tomato cocktail select very red and very ripe tomatoes. Wash and chop and force the raw tomatoes through a fine sieve to extract the juice. To give the drink a little more zest allow slices of raw onion to stand in the juice until the flavors are blended; and season to taste with freshly squeezed lemon juice and a dash of horseradish or tabasco sauce.

If the family isn't enthusiastic about your fried tomatoes try holding in the juices by dipping the slices in beaten egg, then fine bread crumbs before frying. Slightly underripe tomatoes are most easily handled, of course.

For salad eye appeal remember to choose tomatoes with a deep, red color. Be sure to postpone adding the tart French dressing until the last minute if you don't want the tomatoes to shrivel and weep. The acid and salt of the dressing draws the juice from the tomato if the salad stands very long before serving.

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INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

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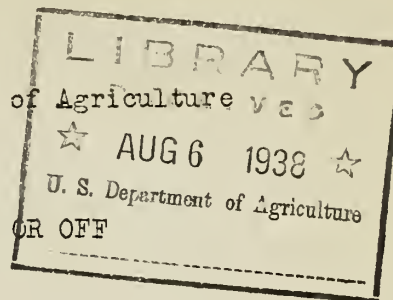
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

SWEET CORN -- ON THE COB OR OFF



To serve corn on the cob or off--that's a question that many a cook ponders these days. It is her unenviable task to decide whether to heed those members of her family who insist that on-the-cob is the only American way to serve fresh corn--or whether to yield to the dissenters and serve the kernels minus the cob.

Since fanciers of fresh corn are so emphatically split into two camps, neither intending to concede one kernel, most women will probably take the diplomatic way out--by compromise. There'll be corn--on-the-cob for those who demand it, off-the-cob for those who like more comfort, less atmosphere in their eating.

What many an American doesn't realize as he staunchly upholds his own ideas of corn cookery is that he's lucky to have an abundance of this luscious stuff in any shape. For the cultivation of sweet corn is practically limited to North America.

Most favored sweet corn region of all is the southern part of Canada and the northern half of the United States. Here the corn grows rapidly because of the long warm days. But the heat is not excessive and nights are cool so that the corn stays sweet in the field. At the higher temperatures farther south the sugars in the corn are rapidly changed into starch.

Sweet corn, like its big brother field corn, is 100 percent American..In 1779, more than a century and a half after Squanto, the cooperative Algonquin,

taught the settlers of Plymouth how to tend their maize, Lieutenant Richard Bagnall brought to that same settlement several ears of sweet corn. This sweet corn, something new to the white man, he had found during a campaign in the North against the six nations.

But once introduced, the white man lost no time getting acquainted with sweet corn. He cultivated, improved it. Today, sweet corn is grown in home gardens over a large part of the United States. And there are extensive commercial fields of it--for canning purposes. Sweet corn ranks among the top three of vegetables canned commercially--out in front along with tomatoes and green peas.

Improvement of sweet corn has been especially helpful to canners. The hybrid corn developed by scientists is more uniform in texture and consistency of grains, more regular in shape and size than older varieties. These advantages have made possible more recent practices such as putting up corn in frozen packs, and an increased use of the whole-grain method of removing kernels from the cobs. Most popular of all with the canners now is Golden Cross Bantam, a yellow hybrid, developed by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Purdue University Agricultural Experiment Station.

When buying sweet corn on the market--or selecting it from the garden--look for ears that are bound up in fresh green husks. If the husks are dry or straw-colored, the corn is probably overmature or there has been damage of some other sort.

Immature corn may not be recognizable until the corn husk is peeled back. If the corn has not reached the right stage of maturity for eating the kernels will be small and very soft. Such corn lacks flavor after cooking. Corn that is "just right" for eating will have a well-filled ear, bright, plump, milky kernels that are just firm enough to offer a little resistance to pressure. It will be yellow, white, or black depending on the variety.

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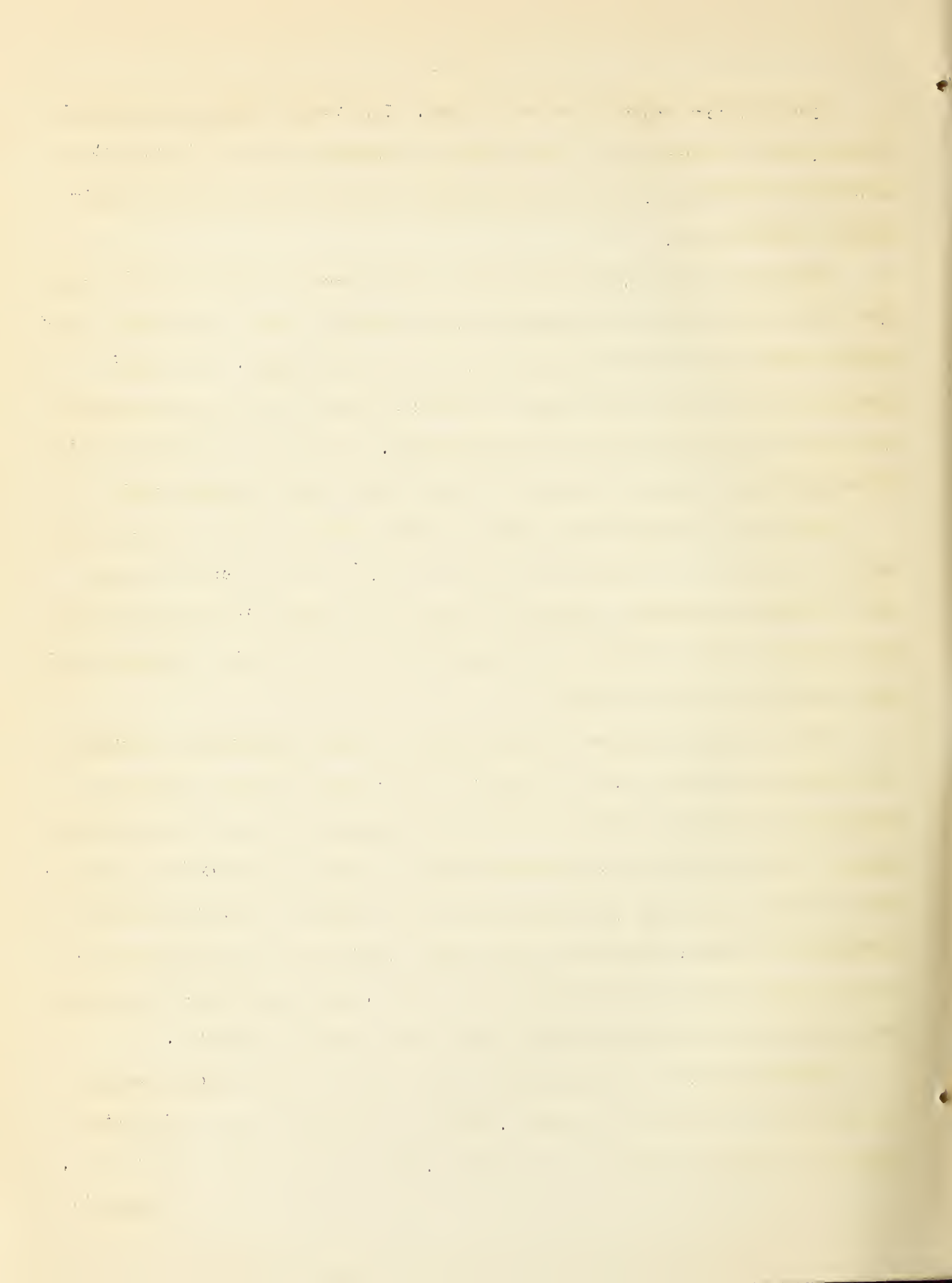
Look for worm injury in an ear of corn. This usually starts on the tip of the ear, works its way down. If the injury is confined to the tip it may not be wasteful to buy the ear. But worm injury along the side of the corn ear is extremely objectionable.

"Out of the garden, over the fire" is the time-honored rule for using sweet corn. The tender corn, if not eaten soon, will toughen. Part of the sugar in the kernels changes over into starch and makes the corn less sweet. If it isn't possible to use the corn right away, it should be shucked and cooled immediately and kept in the coldest part of the refrigerator. To keep corn from drying out in the refrigerator, wrap in a damp cloth or keep in the special vegetable box.

Corn that is shipped commercially is often precooled before it enters the cars. In the cars it is covered with crushed ice, and the temperature is kept near 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Humidity in these cars is exceptionally high and the air circulates freely. However, even under these ideal conditions, shippers do not try to keep corn over 4 to 8 days.

While the plant breeders have been busy with their improvements the cooks have kept pace. But one corn dish they've not been able to improve very much is succotash, the American version of Indian misickquatash. The basic rule for succotash is that it be beans and green corn stewed together, usually half and half, with or without salt pork. The beans may be white, green, or speckled and the seasonings the cook's inspiration of the moment. With the Indian women the association between beans and corn began in the field. They planted both in the same hill and as the corn grew up the bean vines twined around the stalks.

Corn-on-the-cob for indoor eating is best when it is not cooked overlong--and served hot with plenty of butter. Generally medium-sized ears of sweet corn shouldn't be simmered over 10 to 15 minutes. Some like corn cooked on the cob,



then cut off for serving. Corn that is cut off the cob beforehand is especially good cooked in milk.

Other tempting dishes are peppers stuffed with well-seasoned whole-grain corn and corn mixed into a batter, fried in deep fat as fritters. Two dishes that may be made from either freshly cooked or left-over corn are pudding and corn O'Brien. For the pudding, add milk, and eggs, in the proportion for custard. Season to taste, and bake in a moderate oven. For O'Brien corn, mix a bit of chopped pimiento or green pepper with the corn and fry in butter or bacon drippings.

For canning corn at home, it's absolutely necessary to have a steam pressure canner. Without one, it is only safe to preserve corn some other way. Dried corn is fairly simple to prepare and has a characteristic flavor that many persons like especially well.

Sweet corn is canned two styles--whole-grain or cream. Whole-grain corn is cut from the cob without scraping. For cream-style there is a more shallow cut and the cobs are scraped. Whole-grain corn tastes more nearly like fresh corn because it can be given a lighter processing and is not so likely to be overcooked.

Cream-style corn canned in glass jars often becomes brownish because of caramelization of the sugar during the heavy processing that is necessary to make the heat penetrate the thick liquid and the glass. Corn canned either style is not so likely to have this harmless discoloration if it is canned in tin. Tin cans, of course, should be the special C-enamel, first developed for canning corn.

As for putting up corn-on-the-cob at home, this is not recommended. It is only possible to do this successfully in commercial canneries that have special facilities for it and where a certain suitable variety of corn is available.

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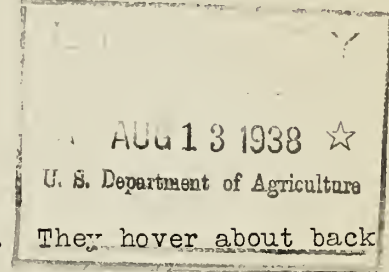
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

IT'S PRESERVING TIME



Mid-August brings its tantalizing, spicy odors. They hover about back

porches everywhere telling us that late summer preserving and jam-making are in full swing in home kitchens throughout the country. Homemakers are taking advantage of generous offerings of garden and fruit orchard to prepare tomato or watermelon preserves, plum or peach conserve, pear or early apple butter, for the family's winter enjoyment.

Late summer fruits suitable for making conserves, preserves, jams and butters will be abundant in most sections of the North and West this season. For the second consecutive year the nation's pear crop promises to establish a new all-time record. There are good yields of tomatoes and watermelons in local gardens everywhere, and there promises to be a good crop of plums in most orchards. Late spring frosts, however, cut down the Michigan plum crop. Supplies of early apples will probably be a little below average this year. And in most areas except California, there will be fewer grapes than usual.

Pears have long been appreciated as a salad fruit, and they have just as much to recommend them for use on the preserve-jam shelf.

For preserving, most pears hold their shape without the slightest difficulty. Their delicate flavor is not hidden, but improved, by the addition of tart lemon slices and a bit of preserved ginger. Few fruits make a more delightful

butter than the pear, especially when its distinctive flavor has been enlivened by small quantities of spice and a generous dose of lemon juice. Even with lemon juice added, pears have so much natural sweetness that they require less sugar than most other fruits.

In August and September the popular Bartlett pears are at their best. But many prefer the late, firm Kieffer pears for preserves. If you want pears just right for preserving or canning--uniformly yellow, firm and yet juicy and soft to the touch--select fully developed pears that are still green and hard. Then ripen your own. Wrap each pear in paper and put them away in a dry, cool cellar for about two weeks. A "come and get me" pear aroma will warn you when preserving time is near. Watch your pears closely for they ripen--and then decay--with surprising speed.

The place of honor held by grandmother's preserves is partly accounted for by the ardor of youthful appetites, fresh from the swimming pool or backyard swing. Through her mother, and grandmother before her, she learned, sometimes by costly experience, some of the rules for making successful preserves and butters. Today the novice can make even better preserves, marmalades, conserves, jams or butters on the first trial, if she reads and follows printed instructions given by experts in this field. Such an explanation of all processes is given in the bulletin "Home-made Jellies, Jams and Preserves" compiled by the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and fresh from the press this year. A copy of this bulletin, F.B. No. 1800, may be obtained by writing the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

Begin by selecting fruit at the firm-ripe stage. Ripeness gives flavor, and firmness is the first essential for acquiring that much desired whole fruit effect. Small quantities of fruit, six to eight pounds at a time, can usually be handled easily.

Of first importance among preserving rules is the one which says WEIGH,
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rather than measure the fruit. You will want it to be whole, or cut in pieces with some resemblance to the original fruit, and kept that way. It is therefore essential to avoid crushing the pieces, a necessity which makes accurate measurements virtually impossible.

Weighing fruit makes it possible to get just the right proportion of sugar, an important factor which sometimes makes all the difference between a prized delicacy and a sticky, shapeless mass. Standard proportions are three-fourths to one part of sugar for each part of fruit.

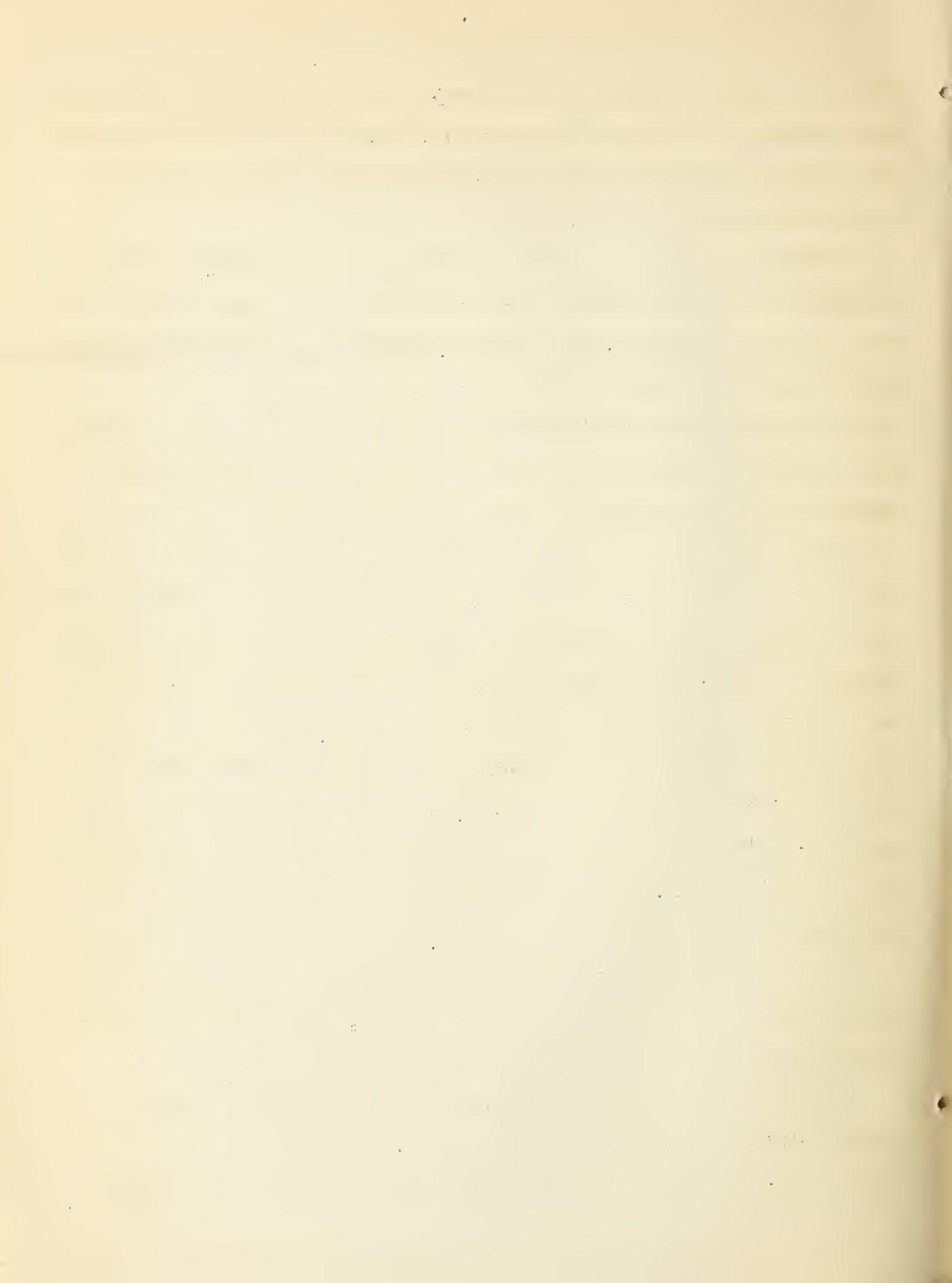
If you are working with a very soft, easily crushed fruit, such as peaches, very juicy plums or berries, use little or no water from the start. The heavy sirup will make the fruit more firm, helping to hold its shape.

For hard or firm fruits such as apples, late pears, and quinces, add enough water at the start to form a very thin sirup. Then the fruit will be cooked to tenderness before the sirup becomes heavy by evaporation, and will absorb more of the sweetness. If quinces are steamed or precooked in water, much of the flavor is lost and the fruit is inclined to become mushy.

Whenever possible shorten the time of cooking, and a brighter color and richer flavor will be your reward. The aim to shorten the cooking time was the inspiration for the idea of allowing fruit to stand in the sugar for several hours before cooking. The sugar draws out fruit juices, so it isn't necessary to add water which must be boiled off later.

Too much cooking will give your preserves an ugly, brown cast and a strong flavor. Recipes which say "cook until thick" sometimes mean "cook until noticeably thickened", for the sirup stiffens decidedly as it cools.

If the preserver is using a pectin-rich fruit such as plums, apples or grapes, the jelly test will tell when it's time to remove the preserves from the fire. If you tried the test for your currant jelly this year you'll be right



in practice. If not, stop the cooking when the sirup no longer runs off the spoon in a stream, but "sheets" and breaks into two distinct drops.

When using fruits lacking in tartness, the flavor and consistency of the preserves is improved by the addition of lemon juice during the last few moments of cooking. The acid helps to stiffen the sirup or make a firmer "jell".

For jams, fruit butters, conserves, and sometimes preserves and marmalades, a little salt helps develop, or round out, the flavor. Usually about one-fourth teaspoon of salt is used for three or four pounds of fruit.

Here is a recipe for ginger pears fresh from the new Bureau of Home Economics bulletin. The bulletin recommends the use of Kieffer pears for preparing this delicacy.

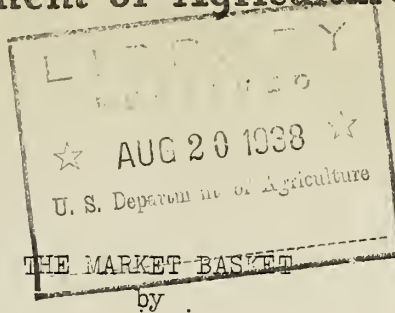
Ginger Pear Preserves

Wash, pare and core the fruit and cut into small uniform pieces. For each pound of fruit use one-half to three-fourths pound of sugar, one to two pieces of gingerroot and one-half lemon thinly sliced. Combine the sliced pears and sugar in alternate layers and let them stand 8 to 10 hours or overnight before cooking. Boil the lemon for about 5 minutes in only enough water to cover. Add the lemon with what water remains and the gingerroot to the pear and sugar mixture. Boil rapidly and stir constantly until the fruit is clear and of a rich amber color. Pour at once into hot sterilized jars and seal.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

VEGETABLE PLATES -- AS YOU LIKE THEM

Thanksgiving may have its roast turkey and cranberry sauce; Easter, its baked ham or spring lamb; and July Fourth its fried chicken and watermelon. But late August is the open season for vegetable plates.

True, vegetable plates are not a part of hoary tradition. Common sense, not sentiment, prompts this custom. Tired summer appetites ask for variety, freshness, interest. Markets and gardens are overflowing with the answer -- vegetables.

June and July have their vegetable specialties, but both months together cannot compete with the wide variety and large quantities offered in late August. In color alone, vegetables range from the deep crimson of the beet, through the golden yellow of sweet corn and the delicate green of the cucumber, to the snowy whiteness of cauliflower heads. The large purple eggplant or huge, green head of cabbage is found next to a basket of Lilliputian black-eyed peas; and straight, crisp celery stalks border on smooth, round, red tomatoes. Perfect building blocks for a summer vegetable plate. Taking it all and all it's more a question of where to stop than where to begin.

At other seasons, construction of a perfect vegetable plate may be a matter of training and expert skill. In late August thoughtful planning and care in preparation are sufficient.

We'll take the vegetable plate, as you like it -- not for the sake of the vegetables, but of the man. And for that reason we'll welcome a strip or two of crisp bacon, a bit of frizzled dried beef, a few tablespoons of zestful sea food, or a ham-hock or fat back for seasoning. Vegetable plate isn't a diet -- its a meal.

You will want to choose vegetables at the height of their season, for then they are cheapest and best. You will want to make use of what your garden has to offer.

Experts of the Bureau of Home Economics do not know your market, nor your garden. But through crop and weather reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture they are able to make an intelligent forecast as to what MAY be plentiful in various sections of the country.

Four good vegetable plates are suggested. Among them they are designed to fit the garden conditions of the country as a whole. Each of the four has a dozen or more possible variations. The thousand and one possible pleasing combinations make vegetable plate planning most fascinating.

Plate No. 1. Starts with corn-on-the-cob, "chewy", juicy, sweet. Next a baked, stuffed tomato -- red, tart, easy to eat. Stuff with what you will. The men folks may like well-seasoned hamburger, or diced pieces of yesterday's roast. Macaroni and cheese is another favored possibility. Use plenty of very dry bread crumbs so the tomato juices won't ooze out all over the plate. Next come shredded green snap beans, topped with slices of hard-cooked egg. Spinach doesn't have a monopoly on egg slices. The flavor of the beans may be enlivened by cooking with a little finely minced onion. Or perhaps you will prefer buttered onions as a fourth vegetable.

Sweet corn, always at its best when fresh from the garden, should be simmered but a short time, seldom longer than 10 to 15 minutes, for the greatest tenderness. Shred the beans before cooking. A mechanical shredder is handy, but the sharp point of a paring knife also will make fine cuts. Don't use soda in the cooking water as it's destructive to the vitamin content of the beans and makes surfaces soft and mushy. It's best to depend upon short cooking time in an open kettle, to retain satisfactory color.

Plate No. II. This time let's start with shelled beans or black-eyed peas cooked with ham-hock or fat back. Along side of the peas or beans add a serving of fried okra, which has been panned in a little fat, but without water, and comes out in delicately browned, round, green slices with little of the gumbo texture. Next some scalloped green cabbage or kale and two or three slices of deep-red pickled beets.

Plate No. III. Begins with stuffed green pepper. Again let the stuffing please the cook's fancy. She'll probably consult the refrigerator for left-overs before she decides. If she finds as much as a piece of salt pork the solution is simple. The salt pork, diced and crisped by frying, is stirred into well-seasoned bread crumbs, moistened with tomato or some left-over gravy. Top with golden brown buttered crumbs or grated cheese to be melted in the oven. Next to the pepper come two large, round slices of crispy, brown fried eggplant, and then a generous helping of succotash. It's best made of green lima beans with whole kernels of freshly cooked sweet corn, but there are many other interesting possibilities. Buttered sliced, quartered or small whole carrots are the fourth vegetable on this plate. If you like, add zest by seasoning the carrots with a very few chopped mint leaves. Parboil the green pepper shells for 3 to 5 minutes before stuffing to help make the pepper tender and at the same time guard against over-cooking the contents.

Plate No. IV. First, baked potatoe, white or sweet, with a generous cube of golden, melting butter. For company occasions the homemaker-hostess may prefer to serve white potatoes on the half-shell, combining the fluffy texture of the mashed potato with the popular baked flavor. After mashing, pile the potato high into the shell and brown over the top in the oven. Grated cheese is a popular topping, and some like the contents mixed with a little crabmeat, shrimp or salmon. Next comes green broccoli, cooked just to the tender point in boiling, salted water, and served with melted butter, or Hollandaise sauce if your prefer. Fried or broiled tomatoes and a crisp celery stalk stuffed with pimiento or seasoned cream cheese complete the plate.

Each of these vegetable combinations, if carefully prepared and well-served, will present a pleasing color harmony, calculated to help rouse hot-weather appetites. On every plate there is one vegetable of bright color, as tomatoes, beets, or carrots, to contrast with creamy yellows, browns, delicate green or white.

Modern artists may be able to produce color harmonies from the most clashing hues, but it's best for the vegetable plate artist not to try to combine beets, carrots and tomatoes -- or any two of these -- on the same plate.

Each vegetable plate presents one food that is crisp and another which offers less resistance to the teeth. One of the vegetables is starchy and filling, the others more succulent and refreshing, giving variety and interest. There is a contrast in flavors between sweet and tart, piquant and bland. One of the vegetable dishes may require elaborate preparation, but others are served in the simplest way possible.

As to food value -- vegetables were made for summer meals. They furnish their share of the minerals and vitamins -- those substances necessary for regulating body functions for good health -- without supplying too many calories.

But each of the four plates suggested above includes one vegetable that is calorie-rich -- as vegetables go. Calories are also added in the form of cereals and other materials used for stuffing and in butter or fat used for frying and seasoning. Protein may be low, even though some meat, eggs, or cheese are included on the plate. So serve plenty of milk to the children and use meat, cheese or eggs at another of the day's meals.

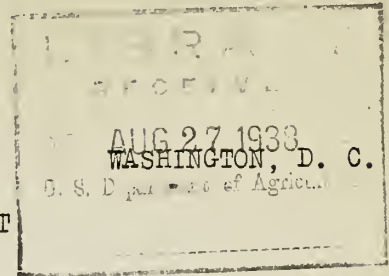
Served with the plate we suggest a hot bread and a simple dessert -- more satisfaction and more calories. Blueberry muffins are in season just now. But if you haven't the blueberries, flaky biscuits, any plain or fancy muffin mixture, or corn bread, or pop-overs, will be welcome.

INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

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THE MARKET BASKET
by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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SEPTEMBER FRIED CHICKEN

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Fried chicken -- golden brown, with a delicate yet delightfully rich flavor, soft and fine-grained underneath its crisp outer coating, meaty, yet tender, juicy, and sweet.

Fried chicken is the ideal meat for the Labor Day picnic. It's likely to be just a little plumper and richer in flavor -- more meat to the bone -- early in September than it was at the opening of the season in July. During the early fall thousands of spring chicks have just finished putting on enough weight to be classed as "fryers". Usually market prices on young poultry are at their lowest at this time.

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All signs indicate that September/will be a favored month for fried chicken feasts, and that late fall months will be equally good for roasters. There are more young chickens on farms through the country -- most of them well fed and in good condition -- than there were a year ago. And so far this season young chickens have been selling at lower prices than they did in 1937.

Commercial hatcheries have been busy filling orders since early spring and mother hens have also been herding many private flocks. As a result, there are 13 percent more young chickens over the country at large than there were a year ago. Most of these chickens are getting plenty to eat, too, for feed is cheap, and heavy rains in many sections have produced a good crop of grass -- and insects.



All things considered, a "more than seasonal lowering of chicken prices" is being predicted for this fall by poultry and egg economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Just now fryers are being sold in large numbers and are rated among the "best buys" on the market. They are a little larger and heavier than "broilers", which are the youngest birds used for food. Fryers should be of fairly good size, weighing 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 pounds "dressed". "Dressed" means plucked, but not drawn, and with head and feet attached.

A 3-pound fryer, dressed weight, should make the basis of a dinner for four people. A 2-1/2-pound bird should serve three, with some meat left over for salad or soup, and 3-1/2-pounder should be enough for five. These estimates allow about half a pound of chicken for each person served, for a chicken loses 25 percent of its dressed weight after it has been drawn, decapitated, and made ready for the frying pan. If you're buying your poultry "on the hoof" it will lose about a third of its weight before it's cut up in serving-size pieces.

When selecting chickens on the market, make sure they are young enough for frying by pressing the breast bone. If the bone is very flexible, the chicken is probably not over the 5-month age limit set for fryers, and is sufficiently tender.

The best poultry for table use is usually short and stocky, rather than rangy in type. Breasts should be rounded and all bones well covered with flesh; with fat well distributed over the entire body. The color of the meat will depend partly on the breed, partly on feeding. Chickens that have been "milk fed" or fattened on a special part-milk ration for a few days before killing, will have a lighter flesh. The skin and fat of those fattened on grain will be yellow.

The skin of the best poultry is soft and velvety and should feel slightly oily to the touch. It should be clean, well plucked, and free from any tears,



bruises, or reddened spots. Injuries to the skin may result from faulty plucking and careless handling and storing.

If the flesh of poultry is bruised the flavor and appearance of the meat will not be as good and it will have poorer keeping qualities.

Chickens too mature for frying, from 5 to 9 months old but still young enough to be cooked tender in the oven, are called "roasters". The first of the new crop of roasters begin to come onto the market early in September and they are sold in increasing numbers as the season advances.

From the standpoint of food value, fryers -- and other poultry as well -- are similar to other lean meats. They are rich in efficient protein needed for building and repairing body tissues. Chicken meat is also a good source of iron and an excellent source of vitamins B and G. Of course, the fat in which fryers are cooked adds many calories to those already stored in the meat.

Like raw meats, poultry should be kept unwrapped or loosely wrapped in the refrigerator, until cooking time.

To prepare chickens for frying, wash well, but not long enough to allow any of the precious meat juices to soak out into the water. In cutting the chickens for frying, consider the size of the bird and the number of persons to be served. If the fryer is large you may want to make separate servings of the drumsticks and thighs. The breast will also go farther if it is cut in two to four pieces. It is easier to handle folded wings, and they usually brown and cook more evenly.

Wipe pieces dry, to prevent spattering of the fat, then add seasoning and sprinkle with a protective coating of flour or corn meal. Or the juice of the chicken may be held in by dipping the pieces in diluted egg then in fine bread crumbs. A thin batter is sometimes used, and this is often the preferred protective coating for deep-fat frying.



In frying, use plenty of well-flavored fat, heated hot, but not hot enough to smoke. The fat should stand half an inch or more deep in the skillet. The skillet should be heavy enough to help keep the temperature even and wide enough to allow plenty of room for turning and browning all the pieces. Keep the pan covered during cooking to prevent grease from spattering over the stove and floor..

Put the largest pieces in first to allow them more time for cooking. Watch carefully and turn frequently to avoid any possibility of scorching. Keep the fire low, to maintain a fairly low frying temperature -- as frying temperatures go. Drain off excess fat on absorbent paper.

Some cooks make young roasters into "fries". They brown the pieces in hot fat in the usual manner, then pour off most of the frying fat, add a little water, and let the bird steam slowly to tenderness, either in a tightly closed pan or in the oven. This moist cooking is also recommended for large fryers, which refuse to cook tender by the usual methods.

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